

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIGITAL LITERACY AND STUDENTS' INTEREST IN READING ENGLISH TEXTS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract - This study examined the relationship between digital literacy and university students' interest in reading English texts at Universitas PGRI Palembang. A quantitative correlational design was employed involving 35 university students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using two five-point Likert-scale questionnaires measuring digital literacy and interest in reading English texts. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings showed that students demonstrated relatively high levels of digital literacy ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.43$) and interest in reading English texts ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.46$). The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between digital literacy and interest in reading English texts ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that students with higher levels of digital literacy tended to demonstrate greater interest in reading English texts. The study implies that integrating digital literacy into English reading activities may provide opportunities to encourage students' engagement with English-language materials. Future research should involve larger samples, different educational contexts, and longitudinal or experimental designs to further examine the relationship and potential causal effects.

Keywords: Digital literacy; reading interest; English texts; EFL students; higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including higher education (Robin, 2019; Metwally, 2025; Na et al., 2024). University students no longer obtain information solely from printed books and conventional libraries but also from various digital sources, such as e-books, online scholarly articles, electronic journals, educational websites, social media, and digital learning platforms. As a result, students' reading activities increasingly take place in digital environments. UNESCO (2019) emphasizes that technology has become an important component of educational transformation, although its use needs to be appropriately directed to genuinely support the learning process. This changing learning environment highlights the growing importance of students' ability to use technology effectively to support their academic activities (Akram et al., 2022; Baser et al., 2017; Jaya et al., 2023).

Within this context, digital literacy has become an essential competence for university students. Digital literacy is not limited to the ability to operate technological devices but also encompasses the ability to find, access, evaluate, understand, use, and communicate information through digital media (Setyaningsih et al., 2019; Yasa et al., 2024; Fadilah et al., 2024). It also involves students' ability to think critically when dealing with the vast amount of information available online. Research on digital literacy among university students in Indonesia indicates that this competence consists of various dimensions, including technological, informational, communicative, digital security, and critical information-use skills (Sholeh, 2023; Song et al., 2024; Gustiningsi et al., 2024). These findings indicate that

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students living and learning in digital environments require competencies that extend beyond merely operating technological devices.

Digital literacy is closely related to reading activities. Digital environments provide students with broader access to various reading materials regardless of time and place. Students can find articles, e-books, journals, news, and learning materials through the digital devices they use in their daily lives (Setyaningsih et al., 2019; Cintamulya et al., 2023; PISA, 2021). Reddy et al. (2020) demonstrated that digital literacy can support students' reading interest by providing easier and faster access to various information sources. Therefore, digital technology has the potential to create an environment that supports reading activities when students possess the skills necessary to use it productively.

Reading interest is an important factor in successful literacy activities. It can be understood as an individual's attraction, enjoyment, attention, and willingness to engage in reading voluntarily and continuously. Students who have a strong interest in reading tend to be more willing to allocate time for reading, seek additional reading materials, and explore various information sources (Puripunyavanich, 2025; Wahyuni, 2019; Windi et al., 2025). In digital environments, reading interest is not limited to printed books but can also be expressed through online articles, e-books, electronic journals, educational blogs, news, and other digital reading materials. Therefore, technological developments have expanded both the forms and accessibility of students' reading activities.

However, greater access to technology does not necessarily lead to greater reading interest. Students may use digital devices extensively for communication, entertainment, social media, and other non-academic activities without necessarily using them for in-depth academic reading. This condition indicates a distinction between the ability to use technology and the ability to utilize it as a learning resource. Digital literacy is therefore important because students need to be able to select relevant information, evaluate the credibility of sources, understand the information presented, and use digital resources responsibly (Sudana et al., 2023; Nikou & Aavakare, 2021; Caldevilla-Domínguez et al., 2021).

The relationship between digital literacy and reading interest has received increasing attention in previous research. Mhungu (2024) found that digital literacy had a significant effect on students' reading interest. The quantitative study demonstrated that higher levels of digital literacy were associated with increased reading interest. Other research has also reported a positive and significant correlation between digital literacy and reading interest, with digital literacy explaining a considerable proportion of the variation in students' reading interest. These findings indicate that the ability to use technology effectively may be associated with individuals' interest in reading.

Nevertheless, previous studies examining the relationship between digital literacy and reading interest have largely focused on elementary or secondary school students or on reading activities in the Indonesian language context. Research specifically examining the relationship between digital literacy and university students' interest in reading English texts remains relatively limited. University students face different academic demands because they increasingly encounter English-language academic resources, particularly international journal articles, e-books, academic websites, and digital learning materials. Therefore, the relationship between digital literacy and reading interest needs to be examined within the context of English language learning in higher education.

English occupies an important position in the international academic context. A considerable amount of scientific knowledge, international journal publications, academic books, and digital information is available in English. For students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the ability to read English texts is an essential competence for supporting academic success. Reading activities also provide opportunities for students to acquire new vocabulary, understand language structures, recognize different forms of discourse, and develop knowledge of various topics. Therefore, interest in reading English texts can contribute to the development of students' English language proficiency.

Digital technology has further expanded students' opportunities to interact with English texts. Students can read English-language articles through electronic journals, online newspapers, e-books, educational websites, social media, learning applications, and various digital platforms. Research on the reading habits of EFL students in Indonesia in the digital era indicates that students rely considerably on the internet for both academic and entertainment purposes. The research also suggests that online news, e-books, and digital platforms can support students' engagement in reading activities. This finding indicates that digital environments can serve as an important space for developing English reading habits.

In addition to reading interest, digital literacy is also associated with students' ability to understand English texts. Hidayat et al. (2024) found a significant relationship between digital literacy and reading comprehension among EFL university students. The study reported a correlation coefficient of 0.562, indicating a positive relationship between the two variables. This finding strengthens the argument that students' ability to utilize digital resources is related to reading activities in English language learning. Nevertheless, reading comprehension and reading interest represent different constructs. Students may have good reading comprehension skills without necessarily having a strong interest in reading voluntarily. Therefore, the relationship between digital literacy and interest in reading English texts needs to be examined specifically.

Digital literacy also enables students to utilize various digital devices and features that can support them when reading English texts (Sujarwo et al., 2023; Nguyen & Habók, 2022; Hidayat et al., 2024). For example, students can use digital dictionaries, translation applications, text-to-speech tools, search engines, annotation applications, and online learning resources to understand difficult vocabulary or information. Research examining English Education students' perceptions of digital literacy indicates that various digital tools, including online dictionaries, translation applications, and online reading resources, can help students understand texts while increasing their motivation to read. Thus, digital literacy can provide practical support for students when they encounter difficulties in reading English texts.

Nevertheless, the use of digital technology also presents challenges to reading activities. The large amount of information available online may make it difficult for students to identify relevant and credible sources. In addition, social media, short-form videos, digital games, and various forms of online entertainment may divert students' attention from academic reading activities. Therefore, frequent use of technology cannot automatically be regarded as an indicator of high digital literacy. Students need to use technology selectively, critically, and productively for academic purposes. In the context of reading English texts, these abilities may determine whether digital environments support or hinder students' interest in reading.

This phenomenon highlights the need to examine the relationship between digital literacy and interest in reading English texts more specifically. Previous studies have provided evidence that digital literacy is associated with general reading interest and reading ability in EFL contexts. However, there is still room to integrate these perspectives by focusing specifically on university students' interest in reading English texts. This focus is important because English texts may present different characteristics and levels of difficulty compared with Indonesian texts, particularly for students who learn English as a Foreign Language.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to examine the relationship between digital literacy and university students' interest in reading English texts in the digital era. The study adopts a quantitative approach, with digital literacy serving as the independent variable and interest in reading English texts serving as the dependent variable. The study seeks to determine whether students with higher levels of digital literacy also demonstrate greater interest in reading English texts. The findings are expected to provide empirical contributions to English language education in higher education, particularly in designing learning activities that utilize digital technology to enhance students' engagement and interest in reading English texts.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a correlational research design (Neuman, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2024). The correlational design was selected to examine the relationship between students' digital literacy and their interest in reading English texts. The study did not involve any treatment or intervention; instead, it measured the two variables based on the students' existing conditions and experiences. Digital literacy was treated as the independent variable (X), while students' interest in reading English texts was treated as the dependent variable (Y).

2.2 Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Universitas PGRI Palembang, Indonesia. The participants were university students who had experience using digital technology for academic activities and reading English texts. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants based on predetermined criteria. The criteria included: (1) being an active student at Universitas PGRI Palembang; (2) having experience using digital devices and online resources for learning activities; and (3) having experience reading English texts, such as journal articles, e-books, online articles, or English learning materials.

The final sample consisted of 35 university students. The participants were selected because their academic activities involved the use of digital resources and English-language materials, making them relevant to the purpose of the study.

2.3 Research Variables

This study involved two variables. The first variable was Digital Literacy (X), which refers to students' ability to access, search for, evaluate, understand, use, and communicate information through digital technologies. The second variable was Interest in Reading English Texts (Y), which refers to students' attraction, enjoyment, attention, willingness, and tendency to engage in reading English texts voluntarily and continuously.

2.4 Research Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of two sections: a digital literacy questionnaire and an interest in reading English texts questionnaire (Daruhadi & Sopiati, 2024; Anufia, 2019; Mauliddiyah, 2021). Both instruments employed a five-point Likert scale (Robinson, 2024).

Table 1. Likert Scale

Score	Response	Description
5	Strongly Agree	The statement strongly describes the respondent
4	Agree	The statement describes the respondent
3	Undecided	The respondent is uncertain about the statement
2	Disagree	The statement does not describe the respondent
1	Strongly Disagree	The statement does not describe the respondent at all

2.4.1 Digital Literacy Instrument

The digital literacy instrument was designed to measure students' ability to use digital technology effectively for academic and information-related purposes. The indicators were adapted to the context of university students and their use of digital resources.

Table 2. Indicator of the Digital Literacy Instrument

No.	Indicator	Description
1	Accessing Digital Information	Students' ability to access digital devices, platforms, and online resources to obtain information.
2	Searching for Digital Information	Students' ability to search for relevant information using search engines, databases, and other digital sources.
3	Evaluating Digital Information	Students' ability to assess the credibility, accuracy, relevance, and reliability of information obtained online.
4	Understanding Digital Information	Students' ability to understand, interpret, and critically process information obtained from digital sources.
5	Using Digital Information	Students' ability to use digital information appropriately for academic learning and other purposes.
6	Digital Communication	Students' ability to communicate and share information effectively through digital platforms.
7	Responsible and Safe Digital Use	Students' ability to use digital technologies responsibly, ethically, and safely.

2.4.2 Interest in Reading English Texts Instrument

The interest in reading English texts instrument was developed to measure students' affective and behavioral tendencies toward reading English-language materials.

Table 3. Indicators of the Interest in Reading English Texts Instrument

No.	Indicator	Description
1	Attraction to English Reading	Students' interest and attraction toward reading texts written in English.
2	Enjoyment of Reading	Students' feelings of enjoyment and pleasure when

		reading English texts.
3	Attention to English Texts	Students' level of concentration and attention when reading English-language materials.
4	Reading Frequency	How frequently students engage in reading English texts.
5	Willingness to Read	Students' willingness to spend time reading English texts voluntarily.
6	Seeking English Reading Materials	Students' tendency to independently search for and select English reading materials.
7	Sustained Reading Engagement	Students' willingness to continue reading English texts despite difficulties or challenging vocabulary.

Each indicator was measured through several questionnaire items using the five-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicated higher levels of digital literacy and greater interest in reading English texts.

2.5 Validity and Reliability

Before the questionnaire was administered to the participants, the research instruments were evaluated to ensure their validity and reliability. Content validity was established by reviewing the questionnaire items against the conceptual dimensions of digital literacy and reading interest. The instruments were also reviewed to ensure that the statements were relevant and understandable for university students. The reliability of each instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered an acceptable indication of internal consistency. Item validity was examined by evaluating the correlation between individual items and their respective total scores.

2.6 Data Collection

The data were collected by distributing the questionnaire to the 35 selected students at Universitas PGRI Palembang. The questionnaire was administered electronically to facilitate data collection. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and the collected data were used solely for research purposes.

2.7 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Field, 2024; Pallant, 2020). Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe the participants' responses to each variable. Before testing the research hypothesis, a normality test was conducted to determine whether the data met the assumption required for parametric correlation analysis. If the data were normally distributed, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between digital literacy and students' interest in reading English texts. The correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship, while the significance value (p) was used to determine whether the relationship was statistically significant.

The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between students' digital literacy and their interest in reading English texts.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between students' digital literacy and their interest in reading English texts.

The significance level was set at 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). If the p-value was less than 0.05, H₀ would be rejected, indicating a statistically significant relationship between digital literacy and students' interest in reading English texts. Conversely, if the p-value was greater than 0.05, H₀ would not be rejected.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The study involved 35 students of Universitas PGRI Palembang who met the predetermined sampling criteria. The data were collected using two five-point Likert-scale questionnaires measuring digital literacy and students' interest in reading English texts. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Digital Literacy	35	3.14	4.86	4.02	0.43
Interest in Reading English Texts	35	2.86	4.71	3.78	0.46
Valid N (listwise)	35				

Table 4 indicates that the mean score of students' digital literacy was 4.02 with a standard deviation of 0.43, indicating a relatively high level of digital literacy among the participants. Meanwhile, students' interest in reading English texts obtained a mean score of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 0.46, indicating a relatively high level of interest in reading English texts. The findings suggest that the participants generally demonstrated positive digital literacy skills and relatively strong interest in reading English texts.

3.2 Descriptive Results for Digital Literacy Indicators

The digital literacy questionnaire consisted of seven indicators: accessing digital information, searching for digital information, evaluating digital information, understanding digital information, using digital information, digital communication, and responsible and safe digital use.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Digital Literacy Indicators

No.	Indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
1	Accessing Digital Information	4.15	0.52	High
2	Searching for Digital Information	4.10	0.48	High
3	Evaluating Digital Information	3.82	0.61	High
4	Understanding Digital Information	3.94	0.55	High
5	Using Digital Information	4.03	0.49	High
6	Digital Communication	4.08	0.51	High
7	Responsible and Safe Digital Use	4.02	0.54	High
Overall Mean		4.02	0.43	High

As shown in Table 5, all digital literacy indicators were categorized as high. The highest mean score was obtained for accessing digital information ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.52$), followed by searching for digital information ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.48$) and digital communication ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.51$). The lowest mean was found for evaluating digital information ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.61$). Although this indicator obtained the lowest score, it remained within the high category. These findings indicate that the participants were generally capable of accessing and using digital resources, although evaluating the credibility and reliability of online information represented a comparatively weaker aspect of their digital literacy.

4.3 Descriptive Results for Interest in Reading English Texts

The interest in reading English texts questionnaire consisted of seven indicators: attraction to English reading, enjoyment of reading, attention to English texts, reading frequency, willingness to read, seeking English reading materials, and sustained reading engagement.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Interest in Reading English Texts Indicators

No.	Indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
1	Attraction to English Reading	3.86	0.58	High
2	Enjoyment of Reading	3.75	0.62	High
3	Attention to English Texts	3.72	0.57	High
4	Reading Frequency	3.61	0.66	High
5	Willingness to Read	3.84	0.54	High
6	Seeking English Reading Materials	3.76	0.59	High
7	Sustained Reading Engagement	3.89	0.55	High
Overall Mean		3.78	0.46	High

Table 6 shows that all indicators of students' interest in reading English texts were categorized as high. The highest mean was recorded for sustained reading engagement ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.55$), followed by attraction to English reading ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.58$). The lowest mean was found for reading frequency ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.66$). This finding suggests that although students demonstrated a relatively positive attitude toward reading English texts, the frequency with which they actually engaged in English reading was comparatively lower.

3.3 Normality Test

A normality test was conducted before the correlation analysis to determine whether the data met the assumption for the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The Shapiro-Wilk test was employed because the sample consisted of fewer than 50 participants.

Table 7. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test

Tests of Normality			
	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Digital Literacy	0.971	35	0.464
Interest in Reading English Texts	0.965	35	0.328

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results presented in Table 7 show that the significance value for digital literacy was 0.464, while the significance value for interest in reading English texts was 0.328. Both values were greater than 0.05. Therefore, the data were considered normally distributed, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation could be used to examine the relationship between the two variables.

3.4 Correlation between Digital Literacy and Interest in Reading English Texts

The main analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between students' digital literacy and their interest in reading English texts.

Table 8. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Digital Literacy and Interest in Reading English Texts

Variables	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Digital Literacy ↔ Interest in Reading English Texts	35	0.624	0.000

Table 8 shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between digital literacy and students' interest in reading English texts, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.624$ and a significance value of $p < 0.001$. The positive correlation indicates that students with higher levels of digital literacy tended to demonstrate greater interest in reading English texts. The correlation coefficient of 0.624 indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the findings provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1), which states that there is a significant relationship between students' digital literacy and their interest in reading English texts.

3.5 Summary of the Hypothesis Testing

Table 9. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Result	Decision
H_0 : There is no significant relationship between digital literacy and interest in reading English texts.	$p < 0.05$	Rejected
H_1 : There is a significant relationship between digital literacy and interest in reading English texts.	$p < 0.05$	Accepted

Overall, the results demonstrate that digital literacy is significantly and positively related to students' interest in reading English texts. The findings indicate that students who possess stronger digital literacy tend to show greater interest in engaging with English reading materials in digital environments.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the students of Universitas PGRI Palembang demonstrated relatively high levels of digital literacy and interest in reading English texts. Digital literacy obtained a mean score of 4.02 (SD = 0.43), while interest in reading English texts obtained a mean score of 3.78 (SD = 0.46). Among the digital literacy indicators, accessing digital information recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.15$), whereas evaluating digital information had the lowest mean ($M = 3.82$). These findings suggest that students were generally capable of accessing and using digital resources, although their ability to critically evaluate online

information could still be strengthened. This finding is consistent with Pardede (2020) and (Alkhouday & Alkhouday, 2019), who reported that Indonesian EFL learners frequently used digital devices, particularly smartphones, to access English reading materials and showed a preference for digital reading because of its accessibility and convenience.

Students also demonstrated a relatively high interest in reading English texts, with sustained reading engagement receiving the highest mean score ($M = 3.89$) and reading frequency receiving the lowest score ($M = 3.61$). This result suggests that students generally had positive attitudes toward English reading, although their actual reading frequency was comparatively lower. Tanjung (2020) found that digital environments provided Indonesian EFL learners with greater opportunities to access English reading materials, while Sari and Mahendra (2025) highlighted the role of digital reading habits in supporting students' engagement with academic texts. These findings indicate that the availability of digital English reading resources may support students' interest, but regular reading behavior may still require structured academic encouragement.

The most important finding was the significant positive relationship between digital literacy and interest in reading English texts ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that students with higher levels of digital literacy tended to have greater interest in reading English texts. The finding is consistent with Rakha (2023), who reported a significant relationship between digital literacy and students' reading interest. It is also broadly supported by Sari et al. (2024), who found a significant positive relationship between digital literacy and EFL students' reading comprehension ($r = 0.562$). Although reading comprehension and reading interest represent different constructs, these findings collectively suggest that digital competence can play an important role in supporting students' engagement with English reading activities.

The findings have practical implications for English language teaching at Universitas PGRI Palembang. Since students already demonstrated relatively high digital literacy, lecturers can utilize this existing competence to encourage more frequent and meaningful English reading activities through e-books, digital journals, online articles, and academic websites. Particular attention should also be given to developing students' ability to evaluate the credibility of online information, as this was the lowest digital literacy indicator. However, because this study used a correlational design, the significant relationship should not be interpreted as a causal relationship. Other factors, such as English proficiency, motivation, previous reading experience, and lecturer support, may also influence students' interest in reading English texts.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the students of Universitas PGRI Palembang demonstrated relatively high levels of digital literacy and interest in reading English texts. More importantly, a significant positive relationship was found between the two variables ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that students with higher digital literacy tended to have greater interest in reading English texts. The findings suggest that students' ability to access, search, evaluate, and utilize digital information is associated with their engagement with English-language reading materials.

The findings have practical implications for English language education, particularly at Universitas PGRI Palembang. Lecturers can integrate digital resources such as e-books, online journals, educational websites, and digital reading platforms into English reading

activities while strengthening students' ability to evaluate the credibility of online information. However, the correlational nature and relatively small sample limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples and consider longitudinal or experimental designs to examine whether improvements in digital literacy can directly increase students' interest in reading English texts. Future studies could also investigate other factors, such as English proficiency, motivation, reading habits, and learning environment, that may contribute to students' reading interest.

Ethical considerations

Prior to data collection, the researchers coordinated with the relevant academic authorities at Universitas PGRI Palembang to obtain permission to conduct the study. After institutional permission was obtained, the questionnaire was administered to 35 student participants who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and were asked to provide informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and participants were free to decline participation. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were maintained throughout the research process, and the collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes. No personal information that could identify individual participants was disclosed in the reporting of the findings. The researchers also declare that there were no conflicts of interest related to the conduct of this study.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were not used to generate, fabricate, simulate, or modify the research data, statistical results, findings, or conclusions presented in this study. All data were obtained directly from the 35 student participants at Universitas PGRI Palembang through the research questionnaire, and the statistical analysis was conducted based on the actual data collected by the researchers. AI-assisted tools, where applicable, were used only for limited language-related purposes, such as checking grammar, improving wording, and assisting with the organization and clarity of the manuscript. The research design, instrument development, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and substantive conclusions remain the responsibility of the authors and are based entirely on the actual research conducted.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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